THE

CHURCH IN THE SCRIPTURES.

A DISCOURSE

Delivered in the Bridge Street Church,

GEORGETOWN, D. C.,

AT THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS,

OCTOBER 30, 1858.

BY THE

REV. J. H. BOCOCK, D.D.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

GEORGETOWN, D. C., *Oct. 30th*, 1856.

Rev. J. H. BOCOCK, D. D.,

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—We, the undersigned, male communicants of your charge, having listened with great pleasure to your able and concise sermon on Church Government, delivered this morning in Bridge Street Church at the Ordination of Deacons, and believing its publication and distribution, at least among your own congregation, would greatly promote their love for our beloved Zion, and be productive of spiritual good to all lovers of the truth, would most respectfully beg the use of your manuscript for publication.

Yours in the bonds of Christ,

M. Buckey,	R. S. T. Cissel,
George Arnold,	Edward Myers,
Edgar Patterson,	J. S. Blackford,
Wm. G. Busey,	J. A. Williamson,
John Bittinger,	William Hunter,
Wm. H. Dougal,	Jacob Ramsburg,
T. Remick,	Jacob Staub,

Wm. M. Tenney.

GEORGETOWN, D. C., *Nov. 2nd.* 1858.

Messrs. Cissel, Myers, Blackford, Williamson and others,

DEAR BRETHREN:—I have received your kind note of Saturday, asking the publication of my discourse on the order of the Church of Christ, recently delivered at the Ordination of Deacons. I am gratified to have your favorable opinion of this discourse, for whose benefit it was prepared; and I will send you the MS., as soon as I can get it into shape for the printer, as I solemnly believe that it contains the truth on the subject as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures.

Most respectfully and fraternally,

JOHN H. BOCOCK.

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THE CHURCH IN THE SCRIPTURES.

It has pleased God to set up a church upon the earth as "the pillar and ground of the truth." The best definition of the Church, appears to be: That it is a frame or system of worship, preaching, sacraments, and government, so put together as to be wisely adapted to keep up a sound gospel and a pure religion among men.

I. Now, in the first place, let it be remembered that the law-book, not only of preaching, of worship, and of sacraments, but of church-government also, is the Holy Scriptures. Whatever church-government is taught in the Scriptures, ought to prevail now; all decrees of human councils, all acts of parliament, all judgments of human authorities, to the contrary notwithstanding. In all church proceed-

ings of whatsoever character, there ought to be constant reference to the word of God, to see that every thing which is done, be done on Scriptural principles. It will not do to say a thing is allowable in the Church which the Scriptures do not *forbid*.

By that rule, any thing would be allowable which the Scriptures do not *mention*. The Scriptures must actually set the thing up in the Church, or else man has no right to set it up in the Church. This is the way to make God's word our rule of faith and practice, and to place the faith of the Church, "not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." 1 Cor. ii. 5.

Nothing, therefore, can be more clearly erroneous or dangerous in tendency, than an argument from what is called Apostolical Succession. That argument is, that the Apostles of Christ established and handed down certain things in the government and worship of the Church, which are not taught in the Scriptures, but rest only on tradition for their authority; and that the Apostles themselves possessed the

right to interpret the inspired Scriptures to suit these traditions, and left that right also to their successors.

Nothing can be more erroneous or dangerous in tendency than this, because it sets up rumors and traditions of what the actions of men were, above the inspired word of God.

It may make the corruptest and darkest traditions, our rule of religion, instead of the clear word of God. It makes our faith depend on the doings, doctrines, and opinions of *human* ages, whether they are the middle ages, or the early ages. It gives to a human corporation, improperly called *the Church*, the power and the right to muzzle, to smother, and to keep down the word of God itself. It turns the Church into a human thing of man's making, instead of a divine institution. It constitutes the Church the pillar and ground of man's decrees, man's devices, and man's doctrines, instead of "the pillar and ground of the truth." With the fearful boldness of a transparent usurpation, it asserts for man, authority from the word of God, to change or to smother that word of

God itself; it gives to the Church the power to reform and to change the word and will of God himself, instead of giving, as ought to be given to the word of God, the power and the right, to reform and to change the Church, when it has become corrupt. It renders Scriptural reform impossible, and a recurrence to fundamental rights and truths impertinent, by making things right in consequence of their antiquity, though they may not be Scriptural. In short, this argument from Succession is the parent of that peculiar system which is forever glorifying *antiquity* instead of *truth;* which loses a *pure gospel*, and then gropes about in *search of the Church;* which investigates ecclesiastical traditions, more than the word of God, and decrees of earthly authorities, more than the inspired pages.

In opposition to this dark and dangerous scheme, the Church of Christ stands only in, by, and through the Holy Scriptures. What church officers the Holy Scriptures set up, ought to be up now; and if they are not now in existence, they ought to be forthwith set

up; and when they are set up, it does not injure their validity and their rightfulness one particle, that they have not been up before, if they are now in accordance with the Scriptures. Thus, by the perpetual fresh touch of his living word, is Jesus Christ the King in Zion in all ages.

The followers of Luther and Calvin have sometimes been asked by Romanists and Romanizers, Where were your churches before the Reformation? They have two sufficient answers to give. One is, *among the Waldenses*, where the only sound gospel was, there were our churches. The other is, *in the Holy Bible*, where the religion of succession and tradition is not now, never has been, and never can be.

II. We have, therefore, on the present occasion, simply to inquire what church officers the Scriptures set up and appoint? And the answer to that question will be our highest law and right, no matter what dark medieval traditions have decreed to be or not to be.

And it is a point on which all, who are not

fully satisfied, ought to desire to be fully satisfied: is the OFFICE of the APOSTLES to be rightfully maintained in the Church of Christ at the present time?

We answer, first: it would appear from the nature of the office of the apostles, to be entirely out of the question, and contrary to the plainest reasons, to consider that office as extending beyond the life-time of the first apostles. When Judas was dead, and it was proposed among the eleven remaining apostles to elect another person in Judas's place, to keep up the number twelve, which they probably thought had a correspondence with the twelve tribes of Israel, they clearly laid down the qualifications which any man must possess in order to be an Apostle:—*Wherefore, of those men which have companied with us all the time, that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained, to be a witness with us of his resurrection.* Acts i. 21.

This shows us what idea the apostles themselves entertained of the apostolic office. To hold that office, a man must have "companied with them" and with the Lord Jesus during his earthly life, and he must be an eye witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from death. And when they had thus filled up the number of the Hebrew apostles, by lot and prayer to God to show his choice, and had made it twelve to correspond with the number of the tribes of Israel, then there was still another apostle specifically and miraculously chosen of God, the great and famous apostle to the Gentiles. He was indeed a thirteenth apostle, because he was to be the chosen apostle of the large, full, fresh, and free gospel just then to be opened and spread out to the gentile world. And from his numerous writings, and his large and shining history, we may learn a good deal about the office of the apostles.

He says that his coming into the apostleship was full late, almost too late, *as of one born out of due time*, because he saw the risen Christ, in the sky above his head, in the bright light near Damascus, on the occasion of his conver-

sion: *He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this time, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all, he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.* 1 Cor. xv.

Here it is seen that St. Paul was the last (officially) of all the eye witnesses of the resurrection of Christ; that he was about the last man that could be an apostle; that he himself thought his commission almost too late, and spoke of himself as one born into the apostleship *out of due season.* If then Paul was introduced into that great office, *as one born out of due season,* what shall we say of those who claim to occupy it now, and vauntingly present themselves to us "clothed with all the authority of the apostolic office?" It is not an office into which they are introduced, but a baseless vision; not a substance, but a mere apparition; not a thing, but an empty dream; a mere human addition to the divine constitution of the Christian ministry.

Then, too, when questioned about his apostleship, St. Paul expressly denies that he received it by tradition, or succession, or in any other sense, from the hands of men: *But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.* First chapter of Galatians. He went not to be touched by the hands of those who were apostles before him. He conferred not with flesh and blood, and on a visit to Jerusalem, three years after the commencement of his apostleship, he saw only two of the other apostles.

Then again, it is made evident that thenceforward after the original apostles, no man can ever again hold that office any more than any

man can be the successor of the Lord Jesus in the office of Redeemer, by the answer which St. Paul gives to the Corinthians, (first Epistle, ninth chapter,) when they called his apostleship in question: *Am I not an Apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?*

This places it beyond doubt that, in order to be an apostle, it was conceded in that age by the churches and the apostles, that it was necessary to have seen Jesus Christ in the flesh. And that the claimant of the apostleship must be able to assert his claim by *miraculous powers* appears from the twelfth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians: *Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.*

Those, therefore, who claim to be the successors of the apostles in their apostolic office, must make good their claim by proving that they are eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ; that they have seen Jesus Christ in the flesh; that they are apostles, "not of men, neither by man, but by the will of God," receiving their commission directly from heaven;

and that God attests their apostleship by the gift of miraculous powers; or else their pretension is contrary to the plainest Scriptures on the subject.

How the Spirit of inspiration avoids giving the name of apostle to any but the original apostles, will appear with tremendous force from the following inscriptions to epistles in which others are joined with the apostles:—

1 CORINTHIANS: *Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth.*

2 CORINTHIANS: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth.*

PHILIPPIANS: *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.*

COLOSSIANS: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother.*

1 THESSALONIANS: *Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the Church of the Thessalonians,*

which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 THESSALONIANS: *Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus unto the Church of the Thessalonians.*

PHILEMON: *Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon.*

Now, comparing these inscriptions in which other ministers of the gospel are joined with St. Paul, with the inscriptions to those epistles in which no other person is joined with him, we discover the following decisive facts:

1. In some cases, where others are joined with him in the letter, he calls himself an *apostle;* but separates the name of the other person from his own, and calls him, not an apostle, but simply a *brother*. This is the case with the two epistles to the Corinthians, and that to the Colossians.

2. In some cases where others are joined with him in the letter, he does not use the word apostle at all, to avoid making the distinction between himself and the other party. This is the case with the epistle to the Philippians, the two to the Thessalonians, and that to Philemon.

3. In all other cases, invariably, when no one is joined with him, he is careful to call himself an apostle most distinctly. The epistle to the Hebrews is an exception, for which there are obvious reasons.

With these conclusive facts before us, it is difficult indeed to believe that the Spirit of inspiration intended to teach us that either Silas or Sosthenes or Timothy were in the apostolic office. It is indeed out of the question in serious argument.

It does not greatly mend the matter or help the cause, to hang a hope, or build an argument on the ANGELS of the seven churches of Asia Minor, who receive messages from the Saviour by St. John, in the early chapters of the book of Revelations. For all the evidence we have on the subject goes to show that those seven churches of Asia Minor were but single congregations, each, of Christian worshippers. Ephesus was one of these churches; and when Paul called together, to meet him at Miletus,

the *elders of Ephesus,* (Acts xx.,) he repeatedly speaks of their charge at home as one flock, "*all the flock,*" v. 28; "*the flock,*" v. 29. The shape and nature of some of the messages in the Apocalypse themselves, and the small size of some of the cities to which these messages were sent, clear the point that these were in all probability single congregations. The angel of each church was therefore the pastor of each church. He was the successor of the apostles, not in the apostolic office, but in the great but simple office of pastor and preacher of Christ's gospel.

III. This brings us, in the third place, to the real and permanent office of the gospel ministry, as instituted in the Holy Scriptures.

Along with the extraordinary office of seers of Christ in the flesh, eye-witnesses of his resurrection, workers of miracles and authoritative planters and trainers of the infant church, the apostles were also simple preachers of the gospel. In this sense, they had many associates and co-workers at the time; as Barnabas, Silas,

Timothy, Apollos, Sosthenes. In this sense, every preacher of a pure, sound, and full gospel from that day to this, has been a successor of the apostles. This seems to be the only point of view in which there is any sense in the apostles having successors at all.

There is nothing left to succeed to, but what is made especially to depend on their extraordinary gifts and miraculous powers. In this point of view, their successors do not come into the apostolic office, as eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, as wonder-workers, and as having the "care of all the Churches," through their extraordinary spiritual gifts, as has been shown. But they succeed them simply as the commissioned preachers of Christ's gospel.

Much of the obscurity about the subject will be cleared up in any mind at once, as soon as it clearly conceives the fact that the apostles were not *mere* apostles; not *mere* eye-witnesses of a fact, however interesting and momentous that fact may be; not *mere* wonder workers; not *mere* general overseers by virtue of extra-

ordinary and miraculous spiritual gifts; but in addition to this, they did also hold the ordinary and perpetual office of preachers of Christ's gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. In addition to their apostleship, they did also habitually perform, in many localities, after the introduction of Christianity was accomplished by the gifts and testimonies of the apostleship, the great, settled, ordinary, and perpetual functions of ministers of the gospel, in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

Now, what we wish to know at this time, is: What office did the apostles profess to hold, in the permanent constitution of the Church, and as ordinary preachers of the gospel?

Let us, then, look at the GREAT COMMISSION which our Lord Jesus gives, just as he is departing from among them, to the apostles, and to all preachers after them to the *end of the world*, that we may see with what powers the Lord himself intended permanently to invest the Christian ministry.

We have need here ever, of the sober daylight of sound good sense, to distinguish be

tween temporary things, given at the beginning, to aid in the introduction of Christianity, as, in many respects and in many places, a new religion, such as: the gift of tongues, the power of miracles, the imparting of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and the office of the apostles as witnesses of the primitive facts, on the one hand; and that permanent and ordinary state of the Church, which should remain after all miraculous manifestations were withdrawn, and that permanent commission of the ministry of the gospel, which was intended by its express terms to last *alway, even unto the end of the world*, on the other hand.

This great commission is as follows:—*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

This is the great commission of the gospel ministry. It is their charter. It is the place

in which the great special promise of Christ's presence with them, as ministers, stands recorded. In express terms, that promise is made to reach even unto the end of the world. Of course, he is here speaking of the perpetual gospel ministry: that permanent office whose duty is not to work miracles, or to attest the resurrection, but to *preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.*

Now let us inquire whether more than one order of ministers can find room to build on the great commission; and whether any higher functions than those of pastors are granted in the charter.

First, we have authority to teach: *Go, teach all nations.* Secondly, we have authority to administer the sacraments: *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Thirdly, we are informed what we are to teach: *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* Fourthly, we have the precious promise of his presence with

us in these functions: *lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

We find here, then, the preaching function and the baptizing function of the pastoral office standing out very clearly. And really, and very obviously, that is the only office which we do find, so much as hinted at, in this great charter of the Christian ministry. It is quite as clear as we ought to expect any such truth to be, that among the permanent offices or orders of the Christian Church, our Saviour's great commission establishes none, gives power to none, mentions none, alludes to none, other than the great Republican and co-equal office of pastor or teaching Presbyter, who preaches the gospel, and administers the sacraments to the people. There is no basis afforded in the great commission for any other order; and that commission is the perpetual valid authority for the ministry of the gospel. That tremendous fact, therefore, necessarily follows—that fact which has been so deeply bound up with living truth, pure gospel, and legal liberty in many ages and places—that all other offices or orders

claiming superiority over the one great simple Republican order of the Church, are without foundation in the word and will of Christ, and stand on no other than mere human authority.

The fact that our Saviour did not intend that any more than one single equal order of teaching Presbyters (or Elders) should have permanent existence in the Church, which is so clear in the great commission which he gave to the ministry, receives important corroboration from certain language of some of the apostles themselves, in their addresses to the churches. If our Saviour intended to establish permanently in the Church, only one single order of preachers, the teaching *Presbyters*:—(this being merely the *Greek* word, corresponding to the *English* word *Elder*,) then it follows that the place of the apostles themselves, in the permanent Church constitution, and as preachers of the gospel, would be that of Presbyters or Elders. Now the truthfulness of the whole scheme is much confirmed by the fact, that we do find two of the very apostles themselves, actually styling themselves Presbyters or Elders.

One of them is the apostle PETER; and the place is the fifth chapter of his first Epistle. He says: *The Elders*, (in Greek, Presbyters,) *which are among you, I exhort, who am also an Elder* (in Greek, co-Presbyter,) *and a witness of the sufferings of Christ*, and *also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God, which is among you, taking the oversight thereof*, (in Greek, being the *bishops* thereof,) *not by constraint but willingly: not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.*

Here the apostle Peter distinctly takes for himself a place in the great equal rank of the Presbyters or Elders, in the permanent church.

The other is the apostle JOHN, who twice calls himself Presbyter or Elder—at the beginning of his second Epistle: *The Elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth.* And of his third: *The Elder unto the well-beloved Gaius.*

And, in addition to all these considerations, which the word of God seems to accumulate

upon us, we have the still further and equally decisive fact that the *bishops*, whose office is described and recognized in the Holy Scriptures, are called *presbyters* in the same sentence, and in the same connection, in which they are called bishops.

One instance of this significant mode of speaking is found in the passage already quoted from the fifth chapter of first Peter: *The Elders who are among you, I exhort, who am also an Elder, feed the flock of God, being bishops over them.* And another plain instance is in the instructions given by St. Paul to Titus, (i. 5–7) *Ordain Elders* (Presbyters) *in every city—if any be blameless—for a bishop must be blameless.* The necessity that *bishops* should be blameless, is made the reason for looking out blameless men to make *Presbyters.* Nothing could more clearly show the mind of the Spirit that they should be one and the same order

Timothy and Titus are simply *evangelists*, as is expressly asserted of the former, 2 *Tim.* iv. 5.—that is travelling ministers of the gospel, enjoying the friendship of apostles: ordained

by the presbytery, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14; the calling of whom by the name of apostles, is cautiously avoided, as shown above.

And it is a most instructive and suggestive circumstance, that though they are ministers of the gospel, closely associated with the apostles, acting under the directions of the apostles, and being their agents in some cases, yet they are not only *studiously not called* apostles, but they never receive any title of lordly eminence, or any mark of lordly rank, over other pastors. They are simply spoken of as "Timothy, my work-fellow," "Timothy, our brother," "Timothy, my own son." And surely, if Peter and John called *themselves* Presbyters, in the permanent Church, so also would they have called Timothy and Titus. [The notes added in our Bibles, at the end of second Timothy and Titus, are not in the Greek Testament, are without authority, and ought to be removed.]

These things taken together render the fact of a republican equality in the ministry of the Church of Christ, with all the vast consequences which flow from that great principle,

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a thing as plainly revealed as could reasonably be demanded. And its influence on human affairs, in favor of a religion of truth and reality, and in favor of a State of just and legal liberty, has been in the past, and is probably still more to be in the future, incalculably great.

IV. The order of Presbyters is distinguished in the Scriptures, into two classes or descriptions of presbyters: (1.) The teaching Elders, or pastors; (2.) The ruling Elders, or helps in pastoral rule and government.

Now, if it be inquired, as it sometimes is, what authority there is in the Word of God, for Elders who are not preachers, but ecclesiastical magistrates, assisting to watch over and rule the flock and the whole Church, it is answered: We have Scripture authority that both the Saviour and St. Paul habitually used the Jewish synagogues as their Church organizations. *Luke, chap.* iv., *verse* 16; and *Acts, chap.* xvii., *verse* 2. The argument sometimes attempted to be drawn from the Jewish *Temple*

organization, with its High Priest, Priests, and Levites, to support certain theories in the Christian Church, is an abandonment of all proper ground of argument. There is no sacrifice to be offered in the Christian Church, since the death of Christ, *for this he did once when he offered up himself*, Heb. vii. 27. There is no real altar since the cross on which Christ was offered to God, *for once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, Heb. ix. 26. There can be, and is, no priest, high or low, in the Christian Church: *He taketh away the first that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all. And every high priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God.*" Heb. x. 9.

A *priest* and an *altar* imply a *sacrifice.* And as *one sacrifice for sins forever* has been offered by the Lord Jesus, there can be

no other priesthood now remaining but his own above.

It is too generally perceived and admitted, to be the subject of further serious argument, that the ceremonies of the temple pointed to Christ, and had their natural termination in him. While he *came not to destroy the law* (the moral law) *and the prophets*, yet the ceremonial law did naturally and obviously cease in him, just as heralds disappear when the king appears. An argument might, therefore, just as well be drawn from the sun, moon, and stars, as from the Jewish priesthood, for the frame of the Christian Church.

But the Saviour and his apostles did evidently and naturally fall into the *Synagogue* system, as the abiding plan for worship and instruction in the Scriptures. And in that Synagogue plan, there were Ruling Elders, or "Rulers of the Synagogue." *Acts*, xiii. 15; *Acts*, xviii. 8, 17.

We answer again: that in all probability they were the Ruling Elders of the Church at Ephesus, whom Paul called to meet him at

Miletus; whom he bade take heed to themselves and the "flock," over whom the Holy Ghost has made them overseers.

For these several Elders were in that one flock (Acts xx.), and there is frequent mention in the Scriptures, of Elders (in the plural number) in one congregation. *James* v. 14.

We answer again: that the apostles directed the ministers of the gospel to "ordain *Elders* in *every* city," whether great or small. And that if they were only Preaching Elders, there would not invariably thus have been more than one in every congregation.

We answer again, that when it is said: *Let the Elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honor; especially, they that labor in word and doctrine*, 1 Tim. v. 17, a distinction is made by the Spirit of inspiration, between "ruling well" and "laboring in word and doctrine," for which there would be no foundation in fact, if it were not true that the duty of one class of Elders, or Presbyters, is to teach, and that of the other to rule.

And we answer yet again, and lastly on

this point, that all denominations of Protestant Christians are beginning to see the propriety of having laymen associated with the clergy in the government of the church, as ecclesiastical magistrates, or religious headmen, in some sense or other; whether they call them Vestrymen, or Class-leaders, or Deacons, or Stewards, or Ruling Elders. We have found that revealed in the Scriptural Constitution of the Church, which other churches have found in the necessities of a safe and sound church government in practice.

V. We come now, lastly, to the office of the Deacons, as laid down in the Scriptures.

The account of the institution of this office in the Christian Church, is found in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews; because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said: It is not reason that we

should leave the word of God and serve tables; wherefore, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

Here it appears, first, that the apostles considered the office of the Deacons inconsistent with the ministry of the word, v. 2. Secondly, that it was instituted expressly to divorce such duties from the ministry of the word. Thirdly, that the duties of the Deacons were the serving of the tables—the attending to the temporal affairs of the Church, v. 3. The Deacon is, therefore, clearly not a preacher—not a minister of the word. He is not only not a preacher of the word, but the very origin of his office grew out of the fact pronounced by the apostles, that "it is not reason" to unite the two. When, therefore, the Deacon is made one of the famous "three orders" of preachers, as far as we can see, it is direct contradiction to the Scripture which establishes the Deacon's office. It does not avail any thing to say that Philip

was one of the seven Deacons, and that we find Philip afterwards preaching the gospel and administering the ordinance of baptism to the Ethiopian Eunuch, as a regular minister of the gospel. *Acts* viii. For we discover from the sequel, *Acts* xxi. 8, that Philip became an "evangelist" after his appointment to the Deacon's office. In fact, when it is announced that he is an *evangelist*, the fact is mentioned that he had been "one of the Seven." There is nothing to prevent one who has been a Deacon from afterwards becoming a minister of the word. And it is a much more natural supposition than it is that a Deacon should preach the word as a Deacon, and thus go contrary to that very word of God to which his office is indebted for its institution.

SUMMARY.

1. Thus, as a frame fitly and strongly compacted together, the great co-equal order of preachers is placed around the precious gospel of Christ, as the guardians of its purity and integrity, the stewards of its mysteries, and

the administrators of its sacraments. It does not seem to be intended that the preachers of the gospel shall be "Lords over God's heritage," or have any unequal pomp, or any human adornment, or cause of pride, or boasting, in themselves; but that they shall be only the simple frame of the mirror of the gospel, that thence the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ may shine forth: and that the glory of the Church may consist, not in earthly pomp, or imposing ritual, but in the heavenly brightness of the pure truth, in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, in the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of men, and in the songs and everlasting joy of the ransomed people.

2. Then the government of the Church is to be, not in the hands of "Lords over the heritage," coming roving over us from afar; but in the hands of its own pastors, together with Rulers chosen by the people, and chosen from among the people, to be associated with the pastors in the government of the church, with the word of God, as the great open charter-

guide, and law-book for pastor, elders, and people alike.

3. Then, in addition to the publishing of the gospel, and the guardianship of the truth, and in addition, also, to the guardianship over the duties and the rights of the flock, which are committed to the pastor and elders; we have also the office of deacons charged with the honorable and responsible duties of taking care of the Church's poor and widows; of being the guardians of the Church's orphans, and of managing the temporal concerns of the Church.

That is, God has built his Church to guard and preserve, 1. the gospel and the truth; 2. order and government; 3. mercy to the poor. These things in all their precious meanings and applications, may our Zion ever strenuously guard and show forth to God and man.

Amen.